[Richard Murphy]

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Gauthier, Sheldon F.

Rangelore

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Richard Murphy, 52, living at 2927 W. Seventh St., Fort Worth, Tex. was born March 1, 1885, at Slapout (no Holden), Brown co., Tex. His father, Martin Murphy, moved to Haskell, Haskell co., Tex., in 1895, and engaged in construction work. Richard Murphy secured work on the 'T Diamond Ranch', located 27 miles N. of Amarillo, Tex., in 1896, when he was 11 years old, and where he remained until 1902. He quit to take a job with the 'Turkey Track Ranch', located in Ariz. He left Tex. He then went to work for the 'Five Wells Ranch', located in Andrews co., where he remained until 1918. After the drought of 1918 in the Andrews co. section of Tex., he gathered 23 carloads of bones and shipped them to Dallas, where they were contracted for by the Williams Metal [?] Bone Co. With the money he received for the bones, he purchased a farm, and thereafter engaged in farming. His story:

“I was born on a farm near [Glapout?] (now Holden). Brown co., Tex., March 1, 1885. When I was 10 years old, my father dragged out to Haskell, Haskell co., Tex. My father had learned the carpenter trade and followed it in Haskell.

“The next year, 1896, I dragged out of Haskell for the Skillet section of Tex. I lit on the 'T Diamond' outfit, which was located 27 miles north of Amarillo; and there I nested for six

years, quitting the outfit in 1902. Then I lit in that section, I don't suppose there were 20 acres of land under cultivation' in the whole section. It was just one cattle range, with a number of cow camps dotted here and there. The foreman on the 'T Diamond' ranch at the time I lit there, Head White, was the owner. The regular hands were John Stockford, George White, George (Jesse) James, Ross Parnell, and John Held . , 2 who was the belly-cheater when we were out with the chuck wagon.. When we were in camp Miss White, daughter of the big auger, cooked our chuck. In addition to the regular crew, we had a few extra hands who worked during the roundup.

“At the time I lit on the “T Diamond' outfit, I was for sure a 'greener' - green as an alfalfa field about cow work. All that I could do was to sit straddle of a hoss, but if it switched it's tail I would go into a spill. However, it didn't take me long to get hipped about the work. I was in good hands, because practically all of the waddies were old rawhides, and top hands. It was an open range, running around 3,000 head of white face Herefords and 1,000 head of Spanish breed hosses.

“My first work was riding the range, looking for strays and banged up critters. My riding pal was 'Jesse ' James, the best rider I ever saw. He was called 'Jesse ' after Jesse James, the out outlaw, because of his riding and shooting ability. He gave me some good riding pointers and I did a pert lot of practicing under his directions. Whenever we had time, a wild broncho was saddled; and I would try my hand at busting bronchos. At first, I would watch James ride 'em, to get next to his methods; then, when I reckoned I had all his tricks in my conk, I tried to do likewise. I put a blanket roll at the front and rear of the saddle seat, which was used as a brace when I first tried to ride 'em. Then I wedged in between the two rolls I did make the grade of staying with the critters and was soon able to discard the rolls.

“Inside of a month, I was riding with the average waddie. I practiced roping along with the riding, and before the year was up I was working as a top hand. At least, the big auger reckoned 3 me a top hand, because he raised me wages from $15.00, the amount I started with, to $30.00 per month.

“The 'TS' outfit joined the 'T Diamond' outfit on the south, which was owned by the Johnson brothers. The 'Q Bar' was / to the west of us, with George Longly as it's top screw. The critters belonging to each of those outfits were mixed among our cattle; and, likewise, the T Diamond critters were mixed in among the cattle of those other ranches. During roundups all of the ranches in that section threw in together and worked first one range and then the other, until the whole range section had been gone over. It took us around two months to make the roundup, and during those two months we lived in the open and it was our hardest period of the year. We did our sleeping rolled up in a blanket, with our conks layed on a saddle. Living in the open was not bad, except when a spell of weather hit in on us; then it did call for a home sweet home song. The rawhides nesting with the outfit was a jolly bunch of buckaroos who took things as they were and said, 'it could be worse'.

“We were always furnished with plenty of good chuck for lining our flues, and John Held was a top chuck fixer. He was tops when it came to fixing beef and beans; and, when mixing the sour-dough for bread, he knew how to manipulate it.

“I worked at cutting out, during the roundup, the second year I was with the 'T Diamond' outfit. I had worked with a number of hosses in my string, to fit the animals for cutting work, and there were three of those critters that could do a [jamb]-up job as cutting hosses. The hosses did everything but pick out the critter and throw the rope. They were fast, and could turn on a 4 cent piece. When I was mounted on any one of those critters, cattle were put down for the iron heaters about as fast as they could burn the animals.

“When the roundup was over and the herd in tip-top shape, we then went back to our routine work; but, before getting down to routine duties, the waddies always took a little spell in Amarillo, to shake off the roundup fever.

“Amarillo was a pure cow-town those days and run by stage. There were just a few women folks in the town, and they were at at premium. Most of the waddies would make the town

after the roundup, and some of the boys would stay there until all their money was gone. Some of the boys played the gambling joints, some just soaked themselves in the 'pizen', and some went sally-hooting in the sally joints. Any kind of a joint that a fellow wanted was in the town to satisfy the waddies' wants.

“I was just a kid, but the older waddies took charge of me so I wouldn't get taken in, or get in wrong, and the boys held me down to earth, but I watched and saw the op'ra.

I' saw some shootings and many bear fights. Nearly all the saloons in Amarillo, at that time, had bull-pens at the rear of the joints. The purpose for which the bull-pens were built was to have a place to shunt the fellows who became overloaded where they could sleep off the load of 'pizen'; also, to prevent interference from the law, or meddling gentry who were looking for a chance to swipe a roll of money. The bull-pen was also used for a battle ground. When a couple of fellows got riled at each other, they were shunted into the bull-pen to cool off. The saloon bouncers would take the guns away from the riled men and push 5 them into the bull-pen to settle the argument, bear-fight fashion. That method saved a lot of shooting, but could not be worked in all cases and there was an occasional shooting.

“When I think of the Amarillo of those days, I recall a big sign that one saloon had in front of it's place of business. It read; 'Whiskey, the road to ruin. Come in'.

“After the bunch had their fever cured, they would jiggle back to the camp and take up the routine work. We could not, as a rule, see the town except when we drove a heard of critters to Amarillo for shipment to Fort Worth, which was where the critters were sold.

“At Amarillo, the critters were loaded in railway cars and hauled to the Fort Worth market. Some of us waddies would go along to act as bull-nurse to the cattle on the trip. Those of us who bull-nursed into Fort Worth always enjoyed ourselves, for a spell, seeing the sights

of the city before returning to the gang; and at times some would get to see more than they expected to look at.

“Our routine work consisted in riding the range and watching the herd's condition, and keeping an eye peeled for rustlers.

“The white face critters gave us very little trouble; they were not bad about drifting, or going on a run. Sometimes, when a real busting storm lit in on us, with sky-fire and thunder, the cattle would start running, but we could put the animals to milling in a few minutes, or half an hour at the most. The Hereford critter can't run fast enough to get a hoss warm following it, so it's easy to handle a stomp of those kind of cattle.

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“The rustlers were what kept the silver out of our cloud. We had a number of set-[tos?] with the rustlers, and many times re-took our stock without seeing the rustlers.

“The hardest scrape I took part in took place in 1900. A party of Indians come over from the Territory (now Oklahoma), working under the direction of a white man named Rep Harrington, and took 400 head of our critters which we had in a herd ready for a drive to Amarillo to be shipped. Harrington was a know rustler, and he used Indians to do his rustling. He gave them a percentage of the receipts from the sale of the cattle.

“It took us a week to locate that herd of 400 head. We located the cattle grazing in the Chisum Canyon on the Red River, being herded by a number of Indians. According to reports we got, Harrington was away at the time fixing a deal for delivery of the herd. In the hunting party, besides myself, were John Stockford, Ross Parnell and Jesse James. We sighted the cattle in the late evening. We knew that it was our herd when we sighted it, off a mile or more, because we had been tipped off that a herd of critters carrying our brand was off in that direction.

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“The Indians spied us when we were about a half a mile off. Ross Parnell had a spy-glass and could see the rustlers'detail movements, and reported to us he saw them move about. It was plain that they were getting ready to meet whatever was coming, friends or foes. We reached a distance of around a quarter of a mile from where the Indians were, when they started to scatter and went to various points of shelter. That move on their part promised 7 an ambush for us the moment we started to move the stock. No doubt the Indians reasoned that, if we were not after the cattle, we would ride on; and, if we were they would warm us with lead.

“We parleyed on our best move and decided that all of us would start shooting at the various spots where we thought one of the varmints were hiding. That was done to get the redskins interested in the shooting, then let James cut back and start drifting the herd away. When he started the drift, the rest of us were to slowly drop away from where the Indians were hiding. Such a move, we calculated, [??] would pull the Indians out of their shelter, if they intended to fight it out. We wanted the Indians out in the open where we were willing to fight them.

“We followed out our plans and opened fire, shooting in the several spots where Parnell said he saw the redskins go. Just at the moment we started firing, the Indians started shooting, but the range was too far for either party to do good work. After a few moments of shooting, James dashed towards the herd and started the animals to moving. That move pulled the Indians out from behind their shelter, but they did not stand up and fight. They would run a piece, and then drop to the ground and crawl a piece towards us. We stood our ground and there was a hot fight for a short spell, and all the while James was moving the herd.

“All of us but James got nicked, and John Stockford was wounded badly. He died a few days later from the effects of the wound. We knew that one Indian was killed and possibly another.

“When James had drifted the critters about a quarter of a mile, which did not take long. we suddenly gave our hosses the 8 guthooks and dashed to where the herd was. That move put us out of range; however, we faced our mounts towards the Indians to indicate we were ready to fight. The Indians decided that they had enough, because they didn't follow us. After a bit, we dressed Stockford's wound the best we knew how and let him and James drive the herd, while Parnell and I rode in the rear watching for a surprise attack. Along about midnight we 'llowed the critters to bed until daylight and then continued our drive to the ranch, which was finished without any further trouble.

“Driving that rustled herd was the longest drive I ever made, with one exception. I was one of seven waddies who went with our big auger to Old Mexico, near Laredo, and picked up a herd of 700 critters. The boss had bought the steers from old San Franciso. He paid $7.00 a head for the herd, and sold the lot for $27.50 a head within 30 days after we had the critters on the 'T Diamond' range.

“It took us 41 days to drive the herd through; and we had the silver lining pulled out of our cloud many times on the drive. We drove the route of the old Western Trail, which runs west of San Antonio. We crossed Red River at Doan's Crossing and then angled Northwest to our range. (Note: This trail is sometimes referred to as the Chisolm Trail and the Chisolm Crossing).

“We had one spell of 10 straight nights that the herd went on a stomp. They were not so bad that we could not handle the critters, but the stampedes put us to working plenty hard every night to hold the herd together. White, Parnell and James had a heap of dealings with the Longhorn cattle and knew how to deal with a stampede. Them three waddies always worked in the 9 lead during a run, while the rest of us rode the line watching for bunches that might stray from the main herd.

“None of us could get it through our conks what ailed those critters. The weather was pretty and nothing unusual seemed to take place, but every night the herd would get

restless and finally go to running. In spite of all that we did to hold that herd quite, the animals had to have their run. We would ride the line, singing, whistling, and talking soothing prattle to the critters, but that did not get results. After the herd had run for 30 minutes or so, the boys would get the animals to milling; then, in about an hour, the herd would be bedded and rest for the balance of the night. The old rawhides said that they never had heard of a herd acting in the same way.

“With all of these runs, we reached Doan's crossing of the Red River without any loss, but in making the crossing we had plenty of agitation.

“The river was high and the water running quite swift. To wait for the water to go down would have meant a delay of about 10 days. Also, there was a herd behind us, and White was afraid that the two herd would get mixed there at the crossing and put us to a lot of trouble cutting out. Because of this situation. White decided to ford the river in the high water.

“We started the [remuds?] across first, in charge of an extra hand named Johnny Francis, and the cattle followed in charge of the rest of the crew. The current carried the whole outfit down stream a considerable distance, which caused those critters to hit against a sheer bank on the opposite side. Also, there was 10 quicksand at the point. Johnny Francis's mount went down with him, and the other hosses piled in on him and his mount; then the critters piled in on the hosses, before the rest of us could cut the herd off and head the animals further down the stream where a landing could be made. Johnny Frances was drowned and stomped to death; in addition, seven head of hosses and five head of cattle.

“We had to float the chuck wagon across with the aid of a raft. Two of us tied our ropes to the tongue of the wagon; and, with the ropes tied, also, to the horns of our saddles, we swan our mounts across, pulling the wagon over safely to a landing.

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“After we had the outfit across the river, we attended to putting Johnny away. We carried him to a cemetery at [?] and there he was buried. We then finished our drive to the home ranch without any further trouble.

“I quit the 'T Diamond' outfit in 1902 and went to Arizona where I joined with the 'Turkey Track' outfit, located 65 miles N.W. of Tucson. The ranch was called the 'Turkey Track', because it's brand was the outline of a turkey's foot. It was owned by the McKinney brothers and they had 92 sections of land in the range, most of it fenced. What was not fenced, the mountains held the critters from drifting off. I stayed with the 'Turkey Track' outfit until 1915, and was one of the five hands which made up the steady crew. It being a fenced range, it did not take many hands to deal with a herd of 4,000.

“There were two of us riding the fence line at all times. and The rest of us rode the range, keeping a watch over the herd and attending to the critters that needed attention, cutting out other brands which would break through the fence every now and then. 11 “The 'H-H' outfit was south of us, ad the 'TL' west. A few cattle from each ranch would be found on our range; and some of our cattle would get out on the other ranges. Every once in a while the waddies of each ranch would cut out the off brands and drive the critters to the proper range.

“We lived at a camp and the supply wagon come once each month with our chuck and other supplies that the waddies needed. We had no belly-cheater to do our cooking. It was done first by one and then the other, depending on who reached the camp first. The outfit supplied us with plenty of chuck fixings. We had all the canned goods we could eat. Our cooking art was applied to the meat, beans, coffee, and bread. We couldn't yell about the chuck but did cuss, at times, at our own cooking.

“We had no rustler trouble, or stampedes, to deal with; so our work was just routine, except at branding time when extra help would be used to help do the job.

“I quit the 'Turkey Track' outfit after my pal, Henry Ford, was killed, because I became lonesome.

“We were all sitting around the campfire one night, swapping yarns, and I was sitting at the side of Ford, with my right arm resting on his shoulder. He and I was singing, or rather trying to sing, the following verse: “'Take me back to my boots and saddle, Take me back to my hoss and blanker, Take me back to my spurs and quirt, Take me back to the open range Where the longhorn and buffalo roam'.

“We had reached about the end of the song and had finished the wards 'Take me back to the open range', when a shot was fired 12 from out of the darkness, the bullet passing through the sleeve of my shirt and entering Ford's head at the base of the skull. He fell forward, dead.

“There had been trouble between Ford and a fellow named Henry Lewis for sometime. That night Lewis came up, unexpectedly, and shot Ford. Lewis rode away, and up to the time I left the country had not been caught.

“I quit the week following the shooting and came back to Texas. I lit in the Midland section and joined the '5 Wells' outfit, which ranged critters around the Shafter Lake section. The outfit adopted the '5 Wells' brand because there were five wells dug for water.

“I went through the drought which hit that country in 1918. That dry spell gave us one of the big jobs that we were called on to do, and that was watching for critters that went to gnawing on bones. When cattle are starving for water or food, for some reason they will pick up bones and go to chewing on 'em. Frequently, a bone would get hung in the throat or jaw of the gnawing critter. It was then necessary to remove the bone to save the animal from choking.

“I recall an incident that took place between Bob Harrington and Tom Lee. The two waddies were ridding together and spotted a critter that was gnawing a bone. When

the waddies pulled the bone out of the critter's mouth, a small turtle dropped out of the animal's mouth and crawled away.

“Now, Harrington was rated as the biggest liar and was proud of the title. He said to Lee, 'By God, you'll have to tell about that turtle deal; folks wont believe it if I chin 13 about it'.

“There were thousands of critters that died during that dry spell, and it put a lot of cattle folks out of business.

“I made a good piece of money as a result of the dry spell. I made a contract with Mr. Williams of the Williams Metal and Bone Co., of Dallas, Tex., in 1921, to take all the bones I could gather at $22.00 per ton. During a two month period I shipped 23 carloads of bones, each car holding around 19 tons. My total sales were about $10,000.00

“I gathered all the bones from around the Shafter Lake section, hauling them to Midland by team. During the first part of my bone gathering, we could gather a wagon load in about 30 or 40 minutes, because the ground was simply strewn with carcasses.

“With the money I made out of the bone deal I bought a piece of land and started farming; and that ended my range career.

“To tell whom I considered the top waddies among those I worked with is a tough proposition. There were plenty of top men, of course, some standing out in one way or the other in the art of the work. For instance, James 'Jesse' James of the 'T Diamond' outfit was the best hoss rider I ever saw or heard talk about. He weighed only 97 pounds, and was as quick as lightening. I never saw him fail to handle a critter, with or without a saddle. He would snub a hoss and then grab a handful of mane and swing on it's back. He could, in some way, stay with any of the pitchers. One time I watched him stay with a critter for half a day, and without a saddle. He just tuckered that animal plum out. 14 “John Stockford was among the best ropers. I have watched many waddies put on the show I am going to tell about, but none could beat John at it. He would put a wild hoss or steer in the pen and

drive it around at top speed. While the critter was running we would call the leg for John to loop and he would do it, rarely missing[.?] it.

“John Stockford could do a trick of shooting that I have never seen any other person do. He would place two posts about 50 feet apart and while mounted on a hoss, starting back around 50 feet, he would ride towards the posts. When he arrived within 25 feet of the posts, he started shooting. Using two six-guns, one in each hand, he could put 10 out of 12 bullets into the posts by the time he reached an even line of the posts.

“My best act was whirling the rope, and I was rated next to John Stockford.